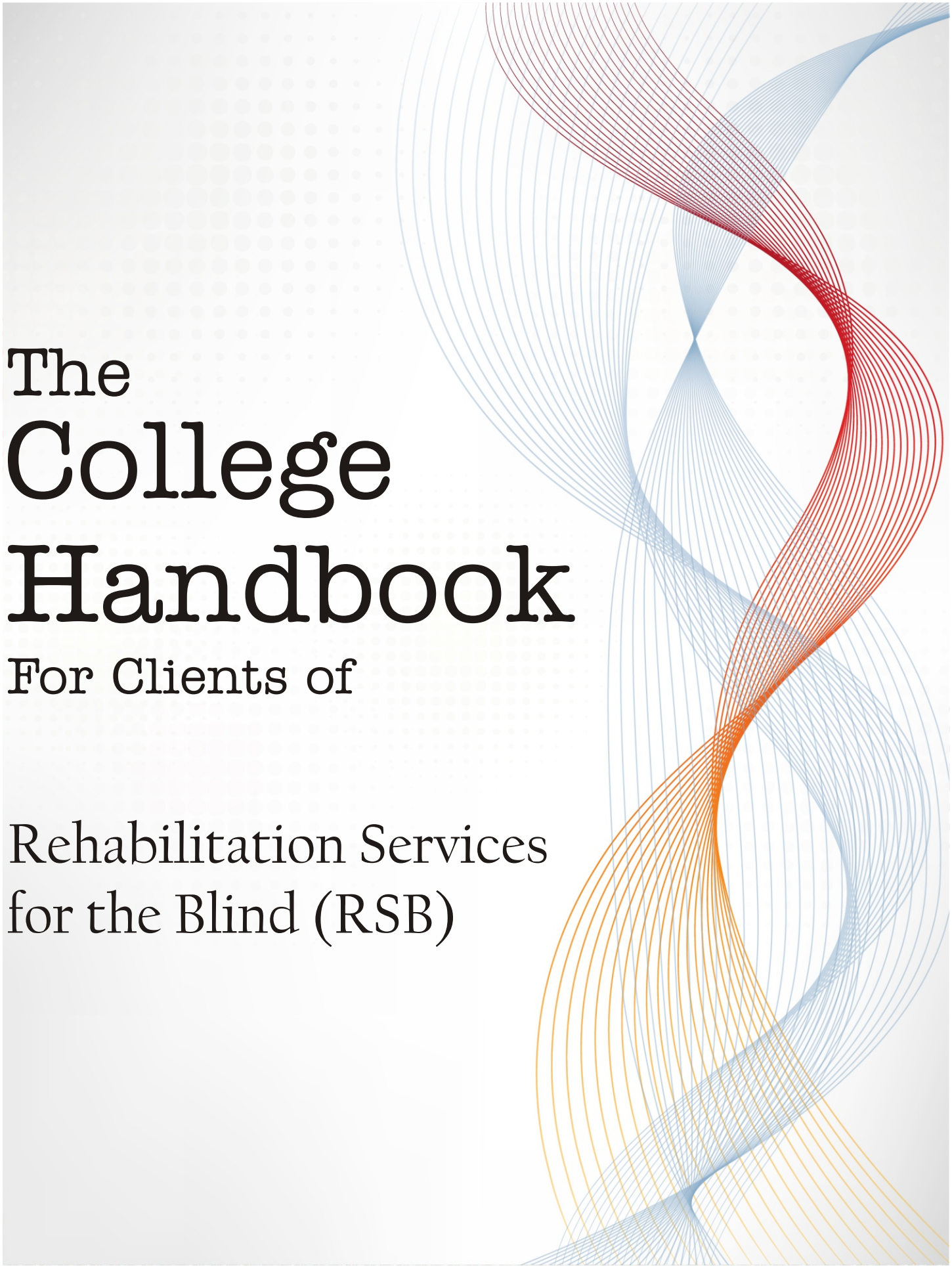
The College Handbook

For Clients of

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB)



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Introduction

This handbook is a resource for Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) clients who:

- Are exploring college as an option
- Are starting or already attending college

Our hope is to give you useful information for making good decisions about college, and to tell you what to expect from RSB and what RSB expects from you. The ultimate goal is for you to find employment in a career that taps into your unique strengths and abilities.

This handbook aligns with the RSB Vocational Rehabilitation Policy Manual. To review the manual for more information, visit:

https://dssmanuals.mo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/VR-Policy-Manual.pdf

What RSB Can Do To Help You Get A College Education

RSB can provide you with many services during and beyond college:

- Counseling and guidance throughout your rehabilitation program
- Alternative skill training (braille, adaptive technology, travel, etc.) to help you quickly gain your independence
- Career guidance to help you identify and prepare for a career that best aligns with your unique set of strengths, interests, and informed choices
- Help to pay for college or training for your chosen career based on your career goal
- Training in activities of daily living (ADL) to help you live independently, such as doing laundry, cooking, dressing for success, and more!

> **An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.**
>
> **— Benjamin Franklin**

- Help paying for transportation and maintenance costs when applicable and when consistent with RSB administrative rule
- Job placement and recruitment services when you are ready to start working
- Agency-written material in a format that is best for you, such as in Braille or digital
- Give information about your rights of appeal if there is ever an adverse case action or a dispute about RSB's services or the way RSB provides the services

Guidelines For Obtaining And Retaining RSB Sponsorship For Your College Education

Before you start undergraduate or graduate study that will be sponsored by RSB, we must identify it as clearly needed for you to achieve employment at the entry level of your chosen field or career.

These are the actions you must take to get RSB funding for college expenses:

Stay in contact with your counselor

You, the student, are expected to stay in consistent contact with your counselor and begin contact with them – do not always rely on the counselor to contact you.

Apply for the Pell Grant

You must apply for the Pell Grant and each year give your counselor a copy of the FAFSA Submission Summary. RSB cannot help pay for college expenses for students who do not apply for Pell Grant funding. This is a federal law.

Understand your options

RSB pays for tuition, fees and other costs associated with college education, but only as appropriate given your vocational goal and RSB policy. It is important to fully

understand what costs RSB will cover and what will be your (or your family's) responsibility. For example, if you elect to attend a private or out-of-state school, you likely will have to pay some of the costs. Make sure you understand your options.

Complete Classes:

- You need to register for and complete (pass) a full course load each term, which is typically:
  - 12 hours for undergraduate study
  - 9 hours for graduate study
- You must only take classes that count toward your chosen degree or diploma.

Maintain Your Grades:

- You need to maintain a GPA (grade point average) of 2.0 each term or higher, or an equivalent passing grade for your chosen degree.
- If you fail to earn the required GPA or pass the required number of term hours, you must work with your counselor to strategize, problem solve, and take action to make required changes.
- Every term, you will give your counselor your term grade reports, which must show satisfactory progress

toward completing your chosen degree. Grade reports are required before your counselor can authorize funds for the next term.

If You Change Classes Or Your Major:

- You must contact your counselor before dropping a class that RSB has authorized for payment. It is important to drop a class early enough that RSB is not charged for the class.
- RSB will not pay:
  - Twice for the same class or an equivalent replacement class
  - Associated late fees or penalties if you drop a class
- You must inform your counselor before changing your major course of study because your Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) may need to be revised. This type of change must be discussed and agreed upon with your counselor.

Understand School Supplies:

- RSB will only pay for books and supplies required by the school and your classes.
- Talk with your counselor about any special school supply needs.

- You will be responsible for paying for any supplies that RSB has not approved.
- If you drop a class, you are expected to return any books purchased by RSB as soon as possible so RSB can get the money back.
- Do not buy books or supplies on your own without first confirming with your counselor that RSB will reimburse you (pay you back) for them.

Tell your counselor about services you may need: You are responsible for telling your counselor before starting any service that you will ask RSB to pay for. RSB may not pay for a service if you do not tell your counselor until after the service has started.

Tools To Use For Academic Support During College

Disability Support Services

This is a highly valuable resource for you! All campuses have a Disability Support Services office, and the staff there can help ensure your success.

Once you are accepted to the school of your choice, we recommend that you contact the Disability Support Services office on campus right away. Their helpful staff will tell you

what they need from you, what services they can give, and how you can access your work while attending school.

Here are some common services they offer:

- Help getting tests and materials in an accessible format
- Classroom space to take tests with extra time
- Readers, scribes, and tutors
- Help with adjustment to college life and stress management
- Academic counseling
- Connecting you with other students with disabilities
- Connecting you with professors

Career Center

Most colleges and universities have Career Centers that offer these services to help prepare you to enter the workforce upon graduation**:**

- Career resources and materials
- Resumé writing
- Job fairs
- Networking
- Career counseling and job-seeking help
- Mock interviews

Reader Services

If you need this service, Disability Support Services and, or RSB's help and funding can provide it. You will be able to access most classwork using assistive technology, but sometimes a human reader may be required. If so, speak with your RSB counselor and, or your college's Disability Support Services Coordinator.

Accessible Class Materials

There are many options to get class materials in your preferred accessible format when it's not available from a publisher. For example:

- **The Center for Braille and Narration Production (CBNP),** run by RSB, was created to make printed materials available and accessible for RSB students. Speak with your RSB counselor and visit the website for more information: https://dss.mo.gov/fsd/rsb/cbnp.htm

- **Learning Ally** is another way to get accessible materials. There is a cost for these materials, so please speak with your RSB counselor before you use this service. Visit their website for more information: https://learningally.org/About-Us/Overview

Actions To Take If You And Your RSB Counselor Disagree

While it is important to work with your counselor, there may be times when you and your counselor do not agree on a course of action. Most disagreements can be resolved by discussing the situation with your counselor or your counselor's supervisor. They may be willing to consider other possibilities and give valid reasons if alternatives are not appropriate. Most issues can be resolved at this level, but if not, you have the right to request a review of the decision using any of the below options. You must make the review request in writing within 90 days of the determination date.

- Administrative review, which is an informal meeting with the RSB deputy director or designee. Most appeals are resolved by the administrative review.
- Mediation, conducted by a qualified and trained mediator.
- A due process hearing, which is a more formal process conducted by an impartial hearing officer of your choice, selected from a pool of approved hearing officers. The impartial hearing officer hears both sides of the issue, weighs the facts of your case, and makes a decision.

To request an administrative review, mediation or due process hearing, within 90 days of the determination date, you must:

- Request the review, mediation, or hearing in writing to the Deputy Director of Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, P. O. Box 2320, 615 Howerton Court, Jefferson City, Missouri 65102
- Describe the decision or action you need to have resolved.
- Include your name, address, and telephone number.

At the administrative review or due process hearing, you should:

- Clearly state your concerns and possible solutions.
- Have a clear idea of what the issues are and the desired remedy to your problem/request.
- Bring documentation that supports your position, if appropriate or available.
- If you choose, have a representative (family member, friend, attorney or CAP representative) present.
- Before the review or due process hearing begins, you must present written authorization to discuss confidential information in the presence of counsel or witnesses.

You should notify the impartial hearing officer in advance if you plan to have a representative or witness(es) at your due process hearing.

Contact The Missouri Protection And Advocacy Client Assistance Program (CAP) For Help With A Review, Mediation, Or Hearing

You can request help from the Client Assistant Program (CAP) at any time to resolve problems or misunderstandings that happen during your vocational rehabilitation program with RSB. CAP is a separate agency from RSB and provides advocacy and information free of charge. CAP has offices in Jefferson City, St Louis, Kansas City, and Fulton:

Jefferson City Office (Administration)

925 S. Country Club Drive

Jefferson City, MO 65109

Phone: 573-893-3333

Toll Free: 866-777-7199

Fax: 573-893-4231

Client Responsibilities

- I understand that I may need to contribute towards the cost of my college education, depending on the institution I select.
- I understand that I am required to apply for the Pell Grant each year and provide my counselor with a copy of my FAFSA Submission Summary.
- I understand that Grade reports are required before my counselor can authorize funds for the next term.
- I understand that I am responsible for informing my counselor **prior** to the beginning of any service if I am requesting RSB to fund the service. RSB may not fund a service if the counselor is not informed until after the service has begun.
- I understand that any charges incurred due to delay in my providing the counselor with required information or dropping classes beyond the permissible date will be my responsibility.
- I understand that RSB will not pay twice for the same class or an equivalent replacement class.
- I understand that I am to register for and complete (pass) a full course load each term as defined by my institution or program of study.

- I understand that I am expected to remain in acceptable academic standing of at least a 2.0 GPA each term, or will meet the requirements of my particular training program.
- I understand that if I fail to maintain these standards I am required to meet with RSB staff to determine if RSB sponsorship will continue into the next term. If I subsequently fail to meet the standards, RSB sponsorship will be withdrawn until I meet those standards for one (1) term.
- I understand that I must also inform my counselor prior to changing my major course of study because the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) may need to be amended. This type of change must be discussed and agreed upon with my Counselor.

My RSB counselor has explained the responsibilities outlined above to me and I agree to abide by them.

Printed name_____

Client signature_____

Date: _____

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Printed name_____

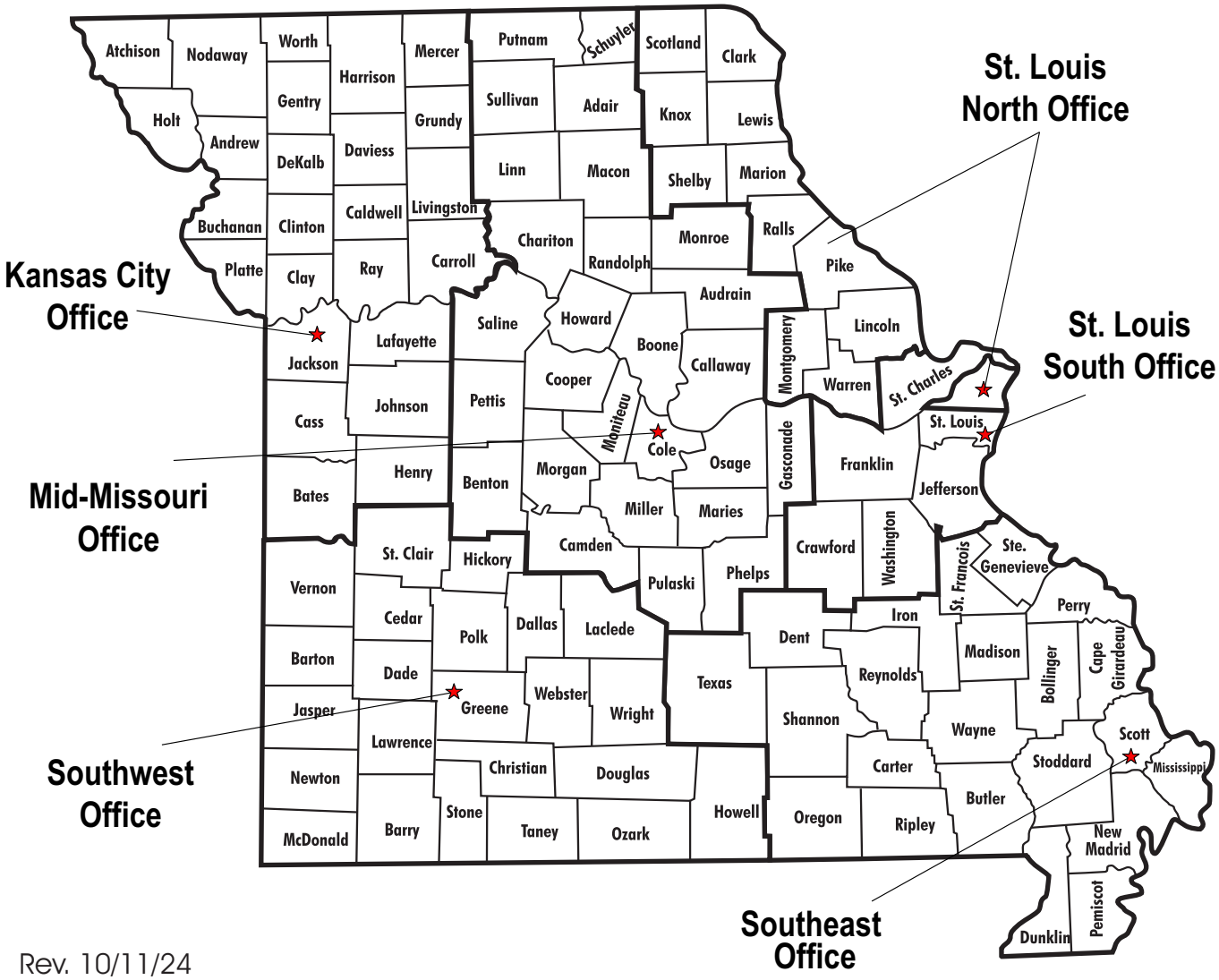
Client signature_____

Date: _____

NOTES

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind
District Offices

Kansas City **816-889-2677**	**Southwest** **417-895-6386**	**St. Louis North** **314-264-7601**
Mid-Missouri **573-751-2714**	**Southeast** **573-472-5240**	**St. Louis South** **314-933-7311**



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